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SUBJECT: WASHINGTON POST ARTICLE ON COLOMBIAN POLITICAL
SITUATION

1. FOLLOWING ARTICLE BY TERRI SHAW APPEARED IN JUNE 9
WASHINGTON POST. FIVE COLUMN PIECE ACCOMPANIED BY
PHOTOS PRESIDENT-ELECT LOPEZ, PRESIDENT PASTRANA,
URBAN SLUM SCENE, AND RURAL SCENE.

2. BEGIN QUOTE

'100 DAYS' PROMISED IN COLOMBIA

PRESIDENT-ELECT'S PERFORMANCE SEEN AS TEST OF DEMOCRACY
BY TERRI SHAW (WASHINGTON POST STAFF WRITER)

BOGOTA-STILL BASKING IN THE GLOW OF A 1.1-MILLION-VOTE
MARGIN OVER HIS NEAREST RIVAL IN COLOMBIA'S PRESIDENTIAL
ELECTION, PRESIDENT-ELECT ALFONSO LOPEZ MICHELSEN IS
PROMISING A ROOSEVELT-LIKE "100 DAYS" OF REFORMS WHEN
HE TAKES OFFICE IN AUGUST.

"THE FACT THAT WE HAVE HAD A LANDSLIDE IN OUR FAVOR
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IS VERY CHALLENGING," SAID LOPEZ, 60, IN A RECENT

INTERVIEW. HE APPEARED CONFIDENT THAT HE IS EQUIPPED TO MEET THE CHALLENGE.

"ALLOF MY PROPOSALS ARE GOING TO PASS EASILY," HE SAID. "WE HAVE A VERY LARGE MAJORITY IN CONGRESS, ENOUGH VOTES TO PASS WITH A CLEAR MANDATE OUR PLATFORM."

WHAT LOPEZ DOES WITH HIS MANDATE IS OF SPECIAL INTEREST BECAUSE COLOMBIA AND NEIGHBORING VENEZUELA ARE THE ONLY LARGE SOUTH AMERICAN COUNTRIES WITH DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED GOVERNMENTS. IN BOTH COUNTRIES, VOTERS RECENTLY CHOSE SLIGHTLY LEFT-OF-CENTER CANDIDATES AS PRESIDENTS.

IN COLOMBIA, WHERE AN ESTIMATED 300,000 PERSONS WERE KILLED IN POLITICAL FEUDING ONLY 20 YEARS AGO, THERE WAS WIDESPREAD SATISFACTION THAT THE APRIL 21 ELECTION WAS BOTH FREE AND PEACEFUL.

IT WAS THE FIRST OPEN ELECTION AFTER THE 16-YEAR PACT THAT ENDED THE COUNTRY'S POLITICAL VIOLENCE. UNDER THE PACT, THE TWO MAJOR PARTIES, LIBERALS AND CONSERVATIVES, HAD ALTERNATED IN THE PRESIDENCY AND OTHER HIGH OFFICES.

ALTHOUGH ALL PARTIES WERE ALLOWED TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS YEAR'S ELECTION, THE TRADITIONAL ONES RECEIVED A STARTLING 90 PER CENT OF THE VOTE.

"THIS ELECTION WAS THE TEST OF FIRE," SAID OUTGOING PRESIDENT MISAEL PASTRANA, A CONSERVATIVE, IN A RECENT INTERVIEW. HE SAID HE CONSIDERED "THE STRENGTHENING OF THE TWO-PARTY SYSTEM" IN THE ELECTION AN IMPORTANT ACHIEVEMENT OF HIS ADMINISTRATION.

OBSERVERS HERE SUGGEST THAT LOPEZ' ACHIEVEMENTS IN HIS FOUR-YEAR TERM WILL DETERMINE WHETHER COLOMBIA WILL CONTINUE TO HOLD DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS OR YIELD TO THE TYPE OF AUTHORITARIAN RULE IMPOSED ON MOST OF ITS SOUTH AMERICAN NEIGHBORS.

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LEFTIST CRITICS DOUBT LOPEZ CAN MOVE FAST ENOUGH TO SOLVE THE COUNTRY'S PRESSING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC WILL CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR "EXTREMISTS" TO CAUSE TROUBLE.

--

OPEZ, A BESPECTACLED, SOFTSPOKEN PROFESSOR AND LAWYER, SAID HIS FIRST EFFORT AFTER TAKING OFFICE AUGUST 7

WILL BE TO SLOW INFLATION AND END SHORTAGES OF BASIC FOODS.

GOVERNMENT STATISTICS PLACE THE INFLATION RATE AT 25 PER CENT IN 1973, WHILE SOME ECONOMISTS SAID IT MAY HAVE BEEN AS HIGH AS 40 PER CENT.

THE PRESIDENT-ELECT, WHO MADE RISING PRICES A MAJOR CAMPAIGN ISSUE, SAID HE WOULD TAKE THREE STEPS TO STOP INFLATION - CUT GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES, SLOW THE RAPID INCREASE IN EXPORTS, PARTICULARLY OF FOODS NEEDED IN COLOMBIA, AND IMPLEMENT A "WAGES AND INCOMES POLICY TO HELP THOSE SECTORS OF THE POPULATION THAT HAVE NO BANKING POWER TO GET A BETTER SHARE OF THE NATIONAL PRODUCT."

LOPEZ' WAGES AND INCOMES POLICY WOULD EMPHASIZE REGULAR SALARY INCREASES TO KEEP PACE WITH THE RISING COST OF LIVING. HE RECENTLY CALLED ON BUSINESSMEN TO DISCUSS WITH UNION AND FARM LEADERS HOW TO INCREASE WAGES WITHOUT PASSING ON INCREASED LABOR COSTS TO CONSUMERS.

THE OTHER REFORMS PROMISED BY LOPEZ IN THE FIRST 100 DAYS OF HIS ADMINISTRATION INCLUDE:

. GIVING THE VOTE TO 18-YEAR-OLDS.

. REFORMING LAWS TO ELIMINATE DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN.

. SIGNING A NEW TREATY WITH THE VATICAN TO PERMIT CIVIL MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE.

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. REORGANIZATION OF THE AGRARIAN REFORM SYSTEM TO CREATE SEPARATE AGENCIES FOR LAND REDISTRIBUTION AND WATER UTILIZATION.

AMONG THE PRESIDENT-ELECT'S LONG-TERM GOALS ARE EXPANSION OF EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES, MAKING PRIMARY EDUCATION AVAILABLE TO MORE CHILDREN AND IMPROVING HEALTH SERVICES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY.

THE SOCIAL EFFORTS MAY PROVE TO BE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE OF LOPEZ' TERM.

" - " -

ACCORDING TO GOVERNMENT STATISTICS, 100 CHILDREN DIE EACH DAY OF MALNUTRITION OR INTESTINAL DISEASES, AND ALMOST 40 PER CENT OF THE POPULATION IS ILLITERATE.

MARIA EUGENIA ROJAS DE MORENO, THE POPULIST CANDIDATE AND BIG LOSER IN THE APRIL ELECTION, PAINTS A DARK PICTURE OF THE SOCIAL PROBLEMS FACING COLOMBIA'S 24 MILLION PEOPLE. IN A RECENT INTERVIEW, SHE NOTED THAT:
. 1.5 MILLION PEASANT FAMILIES "DO NOT OWN ONE SINGLE METER OF LAND" AND ANOTHER 1.5 MILLION OWN ABOUT ONE ACRE A PIECE.

. ONE PER CENT OF THE POPULATION CONTROLS MORE THAN HALF OF THE BEST AGRICULTURAL LAND.

. NINETY-NINE PER CENT OF THE POPULATION UNDER 21 YEARS OF AGE HAS NO ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION; 3 MILLION CHILDREN HAVE NO PRIMARY SCHOOL; 2.5 MILLION CANNOT ATTEND HIGH SCHOOL AND 2.25 MILLION DO NOT GO TO COLLEGE.

. WOMEN ARE PAID ONLY HALF OF WHAT MEN EARN IN THE SAME JOBS.

. 1.2 MILLION WORKERS ARE UNEMPLOYED. COUNTING THEIR FAMILIES, "5 MILLION COLOMBIANS SUFFER THE EFFECT OF UNEMPLOYMENT."

. 3 MILLION FAMILIES HAVE "NO ROOF OVER THEIR HEADS."

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WHILE THE GOVERNMENT DISPUTES SOME OF THESE STATISTICS, THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE PROBLEMS EXIST.

THE FACT THAT HER PARTY WON A MERE 450,000 VOTES, COMPARED TO THE LIBERALS' 2.5 MILLION AND THE CONSERVATIVES' 1.5 MILLION, INDICATES THAT COLOMBIANS ARE WILLING TO GIVE LOPEZ A CHANCE TO SOLVE THESE PROBLEMS.

"THE PROBLEMS ARE SO SERIOUS THAT THEY CANNOT BE SOLVED IN FOUR YEARS," ONE SYMPATHETIC FOREIGN OBSERVER SAID. "BUT HE WILL MAKE A GOOD START."

IF HE DOES NOT, COLOMBIA'S TINY LEFTIST MOVEMENT AWAITS A CHANCE TO MOVE.

"WE ARE PREPARING THE PEOPLE, ACCUMULATING STRENGTH," SAID RICARDO SAMPER, A MAOIST WHO IS ONE OF FEW LEFTISTS TO SURVIVE THE LIBERAL LANDSLIDE AND WIN A SEAT IN CONGRESS. "THE SYSTEM IS AT THE END OF ITS TETHER."

PRESIDENT-ELECT LOPEZ DOES NOT THINK SO. HE HAS SAID

HE EXPECTS HIS PARTY TO MAINTAIN POWER UNTIL THE YEAR
2000.

END QUOTE. SISCO

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